



Students of Ketkirhat Government Primary School in Gaibandha's Fulchhari upazila attend their classes under two makeshift sheds with no wall, since the Jamuna devoured their two-storey schoolhouse during the recent flood.

PHOTO: KM REZAUL HOQUE

# Education at 12 flood-hit primary schools hampered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Squatting on tarpaulin-covered ground, third grader Champa Rani struggles to listen to her class teacher's lecture at Ketkirhat Government Primary School, amidst the din created by students of five other classes.

"Students of more than one class is taking lessons under a single shed, so noise and crowding adversely affects our learning," she said.

Her classmate Mahiya Mahbuba said, "It is difficult to pay attention to our lessons because dust from the adjacent road gets into our eyes and we get soaked when it rains."

Since mid-August, all the students of the institution, from pre-primary Class V have been taking school lessons hurriedly together under two makeshift sheds with no walls or barriers.

Erosion induced by the Jamuna river during the last flood washed away their two-storied school building, which was located near the flood control dyke along river Jamuna in Gaibandha's Fulchhari upazila.

The building was able to accommodate 320 students, teachers of the school said.

Lima Khatun, an assistant teacher of Ketkirhat Government Primary School, said, "We could not even save any educational materials or the benches from the school building. Now we are

conducting all the classes from pre-primary to Class V together under two temporary sheds."

At present, the attendance stands around 60 percent because many students cannot come from distant shoal areas due to snapped communication system after the flood, said Motiur Rahman, an assistant teacher of the school.

Apart from this school, education in 11 other government primary schools in different upazilas of the districts are getting hampered.

According to district primary education department, this year's prolonged flood submerged a total of 220 government primary schools in Gaibandha under four to five feet of water, forcing the schools to remain closed for nearly a month between July and August.

After the flood situation turned normal, classes resumed in 208 schools, but 12 schools could not start their sessions properly.

They are Harubhanga, Dhalipatadhoya, Ketkirhat, Jamira and Anguradaha primary schools in Fulchhari upazila, Chithuliar Char, Chithulia Digor, Baje-Chithulia, Moulvir Char and Keblaganj primary schools in Gaibandha Sadar, and Ujan-Burail and Purbo Lalchamar primary schools in Sundarganj upazila.

Losing their schoolhouses to erosion, some of these schools started classes under make

shift sheds while others are delivering lessons in abandoned areas under the open sky.

As the school authorities cannot accommodate all the students under these temporary arrangements, teachers are apprehending large scale drop out in the current academic session.

In Ketkirhat Government Primary School, teachers are providing additional coaching to fifth graders, appearing in the public examination to be held at the end of the year.

"We are trying our best to cover up the gap caused by class suspension during the flood," said Matiur.

The school managing committee has erected two sheds not far from the location of the previous schoolhouse, he said.

The deputy Commissioner in Gaibandha allocated grant of corrugated iron sheets for the construction of the sheds to continue the children's education, said Rezia Khatun, head teacher of the school.

District Primary Education Officer Hossain Ali said priority will be given to construction of erosion hit schools. Accordingly, reports have been sent to the higher authorities.

On getting allocation, work for the construction of the flood-hit schoolhouses will be started on emergency basis, he added.

## 50 acres of government land freed

Sand was being dumped on about 80 acres area, stretching from the under-construction Syed Nazrul Islam Bridge to Payra seaport

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Kalapara upazila administration during a drive on Saturday recovered about 50 acres of grabbed land near the Payra seaport.

Kalapara Assistant Commissioner (AC Land) Anup Das, also acting upazila nirbahi officer (UNO), said they recovered 50 acres of government land that were filled with sand.

A large stretch of the foreshore of the Andharmanik river in the upazila was being grabbed by a private company in a bid to set up factories there.

Sand was being dumped on a tract of about 80 acres, stretching from the under-construction Syed Nazrul Islam Bridge to the Payra Seaport, to raise the height of the foreshore. The work had been going on for the last one year.

Visiting the bridge construction site recently, this correspondent saw dumping of sand was going on. A signboard put up there claims the land is owned by X Index Economic Zone Ltd.

Locals said the company started putting sand on the foreshore in September last year.

Khalil Mir, who supervises the sand dumping activity, said the height of 80 acres of land has already been increased by eight feet.

Grabbing the foreshore of a river or a sea is illegal, said Lincoln Bayen, Barishal divisional coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA).

Tiakhali Union Parishad Chairman

Moshiur Rahman, who got the contract for dumping sand, said the company told him that they bought 80 acres and it showed him land documents.

"They also said they were planning to buy another 20 acres. So I was dumping sand on the land," he told The Daily Star.

Asked if the foreshore of a river could be bought and sand could be dumped there, he kept mum.

"We have already talked to some locals to buy land. We hope we will be able to buy 65 acres from them," Masudur Rahman, general manager of X Index Economic Zone Ltd, told this correspondent over phone on August 21.

He said they submitted a prayer to the local land office for taking lease of another 25 acres.

According to him, the company is involved in at least 18 types of business, including tiles and power production.

Sources at Kalapara upazila land office said there is very little private land along the banks of the Andharmanik river, stretching from Pyra Seaport and the under-construction Syed Nazrul Islam Bridge.

An influential group of people went to the land office to take lease of land in that area, but when they learnt that it was impossible to take lease of foreshore, they left the office, the sources added.

Kalapara AC Land Anup Das said none can dump sand on the foreshore of a river and start such an activity after submitting a prayer to the authorities (to take lease of government land).



Kalapara upazila administration on Saturday recovered 50 acres of grabbed land along the Andharmanik river and hung a signboard after demarcating the freed land.

PHOTO: STAR



Youths show 'No' cards as a gesture of their stand against social menaces at a meeting on Bachore union parishad premises in Ranishankoil upazila of Thakurgaon yesterday. Inset, Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, addresses the programme.

PHOTO: MD QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

## Youths should work as change agent for better society

Speakers tell gathering in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The youths should be an integral part of the ongoing movement against social menaces like extremism, repression on women and social inequality, Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) said at a programme in Ranishankoil upazila of Thakurgaon yesterday.

She was addressing as the main speaker at a youths' gathering held on the premises of Bachore union parishad (UP) in Ranishankoil.

In association with MJF, Eco Social Development Organisation (ESDO) organised the programme under Protection, Motivation and Empowerment (Promote) of Disadvantaged Youth of Extreme North-Western Bangladesh.

"Youths should work as change agent and fight against social curses like violence, rape and child marriage," Shaheen Anam said at the programme.

"The economic progress of Bangladesh is surprising and we are going to be a middle-income country. But social and humanitarian progress is needed for a sustainable development that would include all classes of people.

"We liberated our country with a dream to establish people's rights, get relief from all sorts of repression, poverty and set up a non-communal society.

"Youths' active participation in the development of the country and women's empowerment are of utmost importance to fulfil the dream," the chief guest said.

The youths can be easily saved from social curses like drug abuse, crimes and religious extremism if the society creates opportunity for engaging in creative activities, discussants said at the meeting.

They urged young people to avail themselves of various facilities under different projects being run by government departments.

At the programme, the youths showed red cards against social curses and showed green cards as a token of their pledge for positive works.

After the discussion, a 21-point declaration of the youths' gathering was read out at the venue.

Earlier Shaheen Anam inaugurated a roadside tree plantation programme and a library set up at the union parishad complex by Jubo network under Promote project.

The project beneficiaries include 6,600 youths, of them 4,620 males and 1,980 females, in five upazilas of the district, the organisers said.

Of them, ten percent are from ethnic minority people living in plain land, five per cent Dalits and two per cent physically challenged youths.

Among others, lawmaker from Thakurgaon-3 Md Jahidur Rahman, former lawmaker Yasin Ali and Selina Jahan addressed while UP Chairman Jitendranath Roy presided over the meeting.

## Villagers suffer for want of permanent bridge

People of 250 families use the rickety bamboo bridge amid risk every day

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Thousands of people of five villages in Barkal upazila of the district are suffering immensely for years for want of a permanent bridge over a canal.

As a makeshift arrangement, villagers make a bamboo bridge over the canal at Uttar Bhushon Chara in the upazila every year.

Locals said the 120-foot-long bridge is damaged due to the overflowing stream during the rainy season every year, causing immense sufferings to its users.

People of 250 families use the shaky bamboo bridge amid risk of accident every day, said the villagers, adding that especially school children are the worst sufferers.

The villages are Uttar Bhushon Chara, Dakkhin Bushon Chara, Pandit Chara, Rokbibo Chara and Pittichara.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent found villagers

using the 120-foot-long bridge to go to their destinations, including different educational institutions and markets.

Nilo Kumar Chakma, a resident of Uttar Bhushon Chara village, said they face trouble while crossing the bridge, especially during the rainy season.

Every year a number of villagers sustained injuries after falling down from the bamboo bridge, he said.

Rozina Chakma, a student of Uttar Vushanchhara Primary School, said she had to attend her school, which is about five to six kilometer from the home, using the bridge every day.

He suffering doubles during every rainy season, he said.

Vushanchhara Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Muhammad Mamunur Rashid said he heard about the matter and will submit a letter to the higher authorities in this regard soon.



This recent photo shows, people including children cross this risky bamboo bridge on a canal at Uttar Vushanchhara village in Rangamati's Barkal upazila, amid risk of accident.

PHOTO: STAR

## Man, wife found dead in Mymensingh

Police suspect a case of murder-suicide over disloyalty

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Body of a man was found hanging from a tree beside a pond while his wife's lifeless body was found floating in the pond in Phulbaria upazila of Mymensingh yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Iman Ali, 45, a farmer from Kandania Bonyapara village, and his wife Aklima Khatun, 40.

Being informed by locals, police went to the scene around noon and sent the bodies to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Firoz Talukder, officer-in-charge (OC) of Phulbaria Police Station.

Locals made the discovery in the morning and informed the police, he said, adding that their three sons live in different parts of the country for their work.

Quoting family members of the deceased, the OC said Iman had been suffering from mental illness since 2017 and he and his wife often had quarrels with each other over disloyalty.

Contacted, Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) SA Newazi, who visited the scene, said Iman might have died by suicide after killing his wife.

No case was filed in this connection till filing this report in the afternoon yesterday.